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The Broken Link

THE BROKEN LUTE.

BY

FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS.

ARRANGED BY

M. ELIZABETH WRIGHT.

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As music and splendor
Survive not the lamp and lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute. — *Shelley.*

She dwelt in proud Venetian halls,
'Midst forms that breathed from pictured walls;
But a glow of beauty like her own,
There had no dream of the painter thrown;
Lit from within was her noble brow,
As an urn, whence rays from a lamp may flow;
Her young, clear cheek had a changeful hue,
As if ye might see how the soul wrought through,
And every flash of her fervent eye
Seemed the bright awakening of poesy.

Even thus it was! from her childhood's years
A being of sudden smiles and tears —
Passionate visions, quick light and shade —
Such was that high-born Italian maid!
And the spirit of song, in her bosom's cell
Dwelt, as the odors in violets dwell,
Or as the sounds in Æolian strings,
Or in aspen leaves the quiverings;
There, even there, with the life enshrined,
Waiting the call of the faintest wind.

Oft, on the wave of the Adrian Sea,
In the city's hour of moonlight glee,
Oft would that gift of the southern sky
O'erflow from her lips in melody;
Oft amid festal halls it came,
Like the springing forth of a sudden flame —
Till the dance was hushed, and the silvery tone
Of her inspiration was heard alone.
And fame went with her, the bright, the crowned,
And music floated her steps around;
And every lay of her soul was borne
Through the sunny land, as on wings of morn.

And was the daughter of Venice blest,
With a power so deep in her youthful breast?
Could she be happy, o'er whose dark eye
So many changes and dreams went by,
And in whose cheek the swift crimson wrought
As if but born from the rush of thought?
Yes! in the brightness of joy awhile
She moved as a bark in the sunbeam's smile;
For her spirit, as over her lyre's full chord,
All, all on a happy love was poured!
How loves a heart whence the stream of song
Flows, like the life-blood, quick, bright, and strong?
How loves a heart which hath never proved
One breath of the world? Even so she loved;
Blessed, though the lord of her soul, afar,
Was charging the foremost in Moslem war,

Bearing the flag of Saint Mark's on high,
As a ruling star in the Grecian sky.
Proud music breathed in her song, when fame
Gave a tone more thrilling to his name;
And her trust in his love was a woman's faith —
Perfect, and fearing no change but death.

But the fields are won from the Othman host,
In a land that quelled the Persian's boast,
And a thousand hearts in Venice burn
For the day of triumph and return!
The day is come! The flashing deep
Foams where the galleys of victory sweep;
And the sceptred city of the wave
With her festal splendor greets the brave;

Cymbal, and clarion, and voice, around,
Make the air one stream of exulting sound;
While the beautiful, with their sunny smiles,
Look from each hall of the hundred isles.
But happiest and brightest that day of all,
Robed for her warrior's festival,
Moving a queen 'midst the radiant throng,
Was she, the inspired one, the maid of song.
The lute he loved on her arm she bore,
As she rushed in her joy to the crowded shore;
With a hue on her cheek like a damask glow
By sunset given unto mountain snow,
And her eye all filled with the spirit's play,
Like the flash of a gem to the changeful day,
And her long hair waving in ringlets bright —
So came that being of hope and light.

One moment, Erminia! one moment more,
And life, all the beauty of life, is o'er!
The bark of her lover has touched the strand —
Whom leads he forth with a gentle hand?
A young, fair form, whose nymph-like grace
Accorded well with the Grecian face,
And the eye, in its clear, soft darkness meek,
And the lashes that drooped o'er a pale rose cheek;
And he looked on that beauty with tender pride —
The warrior hath brought back an Eastern bride!

But how stood she, the forsaken, there,
Struck by the lightning of swift despair?
Still, as amazed with grief she stood,
And her cheek to her heart sent back the blood,
And there came from her quivering lip no word;
Only the fall of the lute was heard,
As it dropped from her hand, at her rival's feet,
Into fragments, whose dying thrill was sweet!

What more remaineth? Her day was done;
Her fate and the Broken Lute's were one!
The light, the vision, the gift of power,
Passed from her soul in that mortal hour,
Like the rich sound from the shattered string
Whence the gush of sweetness no more might spring!
As an eagle struck in his upward flight,
So was her hope from its radiant height;
And her song went with it, forevermore
A gladness taken from sea and shore!
She had moved to the echoing sound of fame,
Silently, silently died her name!
Silently melted her life away,
As ye have seen a young flower decay,
Or a lamp, that hath swiftly burned, expire,
Or a bright stream shrink from the summer's fire,
Leaving its channel all dry and mute —
Woe for the Broken Heart and Lute.

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